UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.3/1997/15/Add.2
5 November 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-ninth session
10-14 February 1997
Item 11 (b) of the provisional agenda*

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STATISTICS

DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND MIGRATION STATISTICS

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission, the results of the review of the draft recommendations on statistics of international migration by the joint Economic Commission for Europe/Statistical Office of the European Communities work session on migration statistics held in Geneva from 30 September to 2 October 1996. The report is contained in the annex to the present report.

* E/CN.3/1997/1.

96-35317 (E) 020197

/...

REPORT OF THE 1996 JOINT ECE/EUROSTAT WORK SESSION ON MIGRATION STATISTICS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The joint ECE/Eurostat work session on migration statistics was held in Geneva from 30 September to 2 October 1996. It was attended by Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom and United States. The European Community was represented by Eurostat. Representatives of the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), of UNHCR and of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) also attended.

2. The provisional agenda (Working Paper No. 1) was adopted.

3. Mr. Fred Ashwood (United Kingdom) was elected to chair the meeting.

4. The main conclusions which the participants reached on the draft new set of international migration statistics and on possible future work by the Conference of European Statisticians in this field are given below. The conclusions which the meeting reached on other substantive items of the agenda are shown in the Annex.

II. THE PROPOSED DRAFT NEW SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The document containing the proposed draft new set of recommendations on international migration statistics (Working Paper No. 2) was viewed as a major step forward in the development of a new set of recommendations on international migration statistics. It was seen as a valuable tool for improving migration statistics in some countries, and as providing a basis for improving international comparability in this field. The following points were also raised in general discussion of the document:

(a) There is a need to restructure the document to place the general definition of an international migrant and the conceptual framework at the beginning. The relationship between the general definition and the framework needs to be more clearly specified. It also needs to be stated how the definition is to be applied in the various data sources.

(b) There is a need to address more directly the distinction between short-term and long-term migrants.

(c) Concern was expressed about the use of new terminology such as "abode" and "insider" and "outsider".

(d) The draft needs to consider shifts in migration status, for example, short-term migrants becoming long-term migrants, asylum seekers becoming refugees, and students becoming workers.

(e) Consideration should be given to the possibility of double counting when multiple sources are used.

(f) Attention should be placed on how to obtain the total number of migrants.

(g) The links between flows and stocks should be clarified.

(h) Questions were raised about the use of citizenship as a basic criterion for identification of different groups of migrants as opposed to a characteristic. It was considered that citizenship should not appear in the taxonomy (e.g. Box 1) but that it should be included in the identification of different groups (e.g. Table 2).

(i) Occupation, education, industry and marital status were seen as useful topics for the collection of data on immigrant stocks but most participants felt that such data should not be included in the core characteristics for flows.

(j) Several participants considered that the treatment of stock relevant to the study of international migration had been treated more comprehensively in the earlier Eurostat/UNSD draft.

6. The meeting recognized that because of the need to obtain input from all regions and the tight timetable imposed by translation deadlines, it would not be possible to produce an amended draft in time to have it considered at the February 1997 session of the Statistical Commission. However there was also general agreement that in considering this draft the Statistical Commission should recognize that due consideration should be given to making changes along the lines recommended in paragraph 5 above and in paragraph 7 below. The meeting also recommended that mechanisms be found which would permit the adoption of the new set of recommendations as soon as possible after the 1997 session of the Statistical Commission.

7. There was also a detailed discussion of each chapter of the draft which the representative of the Statistical Division took note of for further consideration and follow-up. Two of these comments were considered of particular importance:

(a) The definition of an international migrant should be as in the earlier draft, i.e. a person who changed country of usual residence. The new census recommendations on the treatment of usual residence should be taken into account. Introducing a time element into the definition complicates rather than clarifies the identification of a migrant. The time elements should be introduced in later sections to distinguish short-term and long-term migrants.

(b) There was also discussion about the inclusion of the section on asylum statistics in the recommendations. Although the January 1996 ECE-Eurostat Working Party on Migration Statistics had recommended that it should not be

included, the importance of the topic was recognized. Since the United Nations Statistics Division would not be able to prepare an additional publication, it was suggested that asylum statistics be included with the new recommendations as a separate last part or as an annex with an appropriate introduction.

8. Because countries had not had sufficient time to consider or consult on the draft prior to the meeting, they were invited to send any additional comments to Mr. Hermann Habermann, Statistics Division, United Nations, New York, New York 10017, and to copy them to Mr. Yves Franchet, Director General of Eurostat, by the end of October 1996.

III. RECOMMENDED FUTURE WORK BY THE CONFERENCE

9. The meeting agreed that the important conceptual and measurement difficulties that statistical offices throughout the region encounter in the field of migration statistics warranted that a further meeting on migration statistics be organized in the future to discuss priority topics in this field. It recommended, therefore, that the Conference convene a further ECE-Eurostat joint meeting in two years time (1997/98, and preferably in the last half of 1997), to consider the following topics:

(i) The use of sample surveys and censuses to measure international migration stocks and flows (including countries plans for collecting migration data in the next round of censuses);

(ii) Studies of migration between ECE countries using, as appropriate, the Eurostat database, and comparing statistics on inflows and outflows for identical moves;

(iii) Problems and issues seen or experienced in implementing the new set of recommendations on international migration, including an inventory of data availability, and exploring special topics such as status changes, different terminologies and definitions used by countries, and undocumented migration;

(iv) The various models used for forecasting migration within a country, and for projecting populations with immigrant backgrounds.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

10. The Meeting adopted the present report, including the conclusions shown in the Annex, at its closing session.